

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 00556 01 OF 02 161210Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6234
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 0556

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GY, PDIP, PINT
SUBJECT: "RESIGNATION" OF FORMIN WILLS

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 0527, (B) GEORGETOWN 0528

SUMMARY: SIGNIFICANCE OF AND REASONS FOR MINFORAFFAIRS WILLS'
SUDDEN REMOVAL FROM THE GUYANESE CABINET ARE ONLY GRADUALLY
EMERGING AND ARE NOT YET CLEAR EVEN TO WILLS. HE WAS FORCED TO
RESIGN BY PRIMIN BURNHAM. HE WILL BE MISSED AS AN INTERLOCUTOR
BY THIS EMB. HIS DEPARTURE COULD SIGNAL A SHIFT IN RECENT GOG
FOREIGN POLICY AND PUTS INTO LIMBO VARIOUS ONGOING FOREIGN POLICY
INITIATIVES WITH WHICH HE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DEPARTURE OF FOREIGN MINISTER FRED WILLS FROM
BURNHAM'S CABINET WAS ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 13 AS WAS THE
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PAGE 02 GEORGE 00556 01 OF 02 161210Z

DESIGNATION OF HIS SUCCESSOR, RASHLEIGH JACKSON, WHO
UNTIL NOW HAS BEEN GUYANA'S UN REP. ACCORDING TO THE
GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT, WILLS RESIGNED BECAUSE OF
"ILL HEALTH." IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH US, HOW-
EVER, WILLS HAS ADMITTED CANDIDLY THAT HIS RESIGNATION
WAS FORCED BY PRIMIN BURNHAM. TWO THINGS HE SAID
BURNHAM MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY WERE (A) THE HE (WILLS) HAD HAD

TROUBLE IN WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE MINISTRY AND WITH THE AMBASSADORS ABROAD; AND (B) THAT DEBTS WILLS' ESTRANGED WIFE HAD RUN UP IN LONDON HAD BEEN IRREGULARLY PAID BY WILLS IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE CONTROLS ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE TRANSFERS. WILLS CHARACTERIZED THESE REASONS AS "EXCUSES" AND PROFESSES NOT TO KNOW EXACTLY WHY HE WAS FIRED, ALTHOUGH HE BLAMES CERTAIN ENEMIES WHO HAD POISONED BURNHAM AGAINST HIM (AMBASSADOR MANN IN WASHINGTON IS ONE HE MENTIONED). HE STILL SEEMS INCAPABLE OF IDENTIFYING EITHER TO OTHERS OR HIMSELF THE PRIME REASON FOR HIS DISMISSAL.

2. PRINCIPAL REASON IS PROBABLY THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE WHICH WAS HELD HERE IN GEORGETOWN JANUARY 16-29 (REFTEL B). NORMALLY THESE ANNUAL SESSIONS RUN ONLY ONE WEEK AND SELDOM INVOLVE ANY INTENSIVE OR SWEEPING POLICY REVIEWS. THIS YEAR, BY CONTRAST, THE MEETING LASTED A FORTNIGHT AND, UNDER WILLS' CHAIRMANSHIP, BECAME VERY SUBSTANTIVE AND EVOLVED INTO A "GREAT DEBATE" OVER RECENT GUYANESE FOREIGN POLICY WHICH BY IMPLICATION WAS CRITICAL OF PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM'S GOVERNMENT AND BURNHAM PERSONALLY. BURNHAM HIMSELF OPENED THE CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING AND CLOSED IT ON THE LAST DAY. DURING THAT FINAL SESSION SEVERAL DIPLOMATS SPOKE VERY CANDIDLY ABOUT THE FAILURE OF CUBA OR THE NATIONS OF

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PAGE 03 GEORGE 00556 01 OF 02 161210Z

THE SOVIET BLOC TO COME TO THE AID OF GUYANA IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY DURING ITS PRESENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. BY CONTRAST, SEVERAL SPEAKERS CITED THE FACT THAT CANADA, THE UK AND THE US HAD BEEN HELPFUL DESPITE THE FACT THAT GOG HAD VEERED SO SHARPLY TO THE LEFT BOTH IN ITS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICIES OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY WILLS TOOK CREDIT FOR DIRECTING DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING. HE EXPRESSED PERSONAL GRATIFICATION THAT THE CONSENSUS SEEMED TO SUPPORT HIS OWN FEELING THAT A POLICY REVIEW AND THE SETTING OF NEW DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES SEEMED INDICATED GIVEN THE UNSATISFACTORY RESULTS ACHIEVED FROM PAST POLICIES AND THE CRITICAL NEEDS OF THE MOMENT. WHAT WAS BEING QUESTIONED, OBVIOUSLY, WAS THE SOFIA DECLARATION (14 DECEMBER 1974) AND GUYANA'S COMMITMENT TO "COOPERATIVE SOCIALISM."

3. PRIMIN BURNHAM, ACCORDING TO SOME, WAS IRRITATED BY WHAT HE SAW AS A PERSONAL ATTACK ON HIM AND THE FUNDAMENTAL POLICIES OF HIS GOVERNMENT. THOUGHT HE DID NOT CHALLENGE THE THESIS IN THE CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING AND REMAINED NONCOMMITTAL, THERE WERE REPORTS IMMEDIATELY

AFTER THE SESSIONS CLOSED THAT HE INTENDED TO TAKE
CORRECTIVE ACTION ON A PIECEMEAL BASIS AGAINST THOSE
WHOM HE CONSIDERED THE "LEADERS" OF THE "REVOLT."
WILLS APPEARS TO BE THE FIRST VICTIM. WHETHER OTHERS WHO
ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SUBSCRIBED TO THE "NEW DIRECTIONS"
THESIS WILL ALSO BE DEALT WITH BY BEING REMOVED OR
POSTED ELSEWHERE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS WHICH INFLUENCED BURNHAM TO
DISMISS HIM ARE, ACCORDING TO WILLS, THE FOLLOWING:
A) HE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO "DELIVER" BURNHAM'S HOPED-FOR
MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER (THIS, SAID WILLS, WAS
AMB. MANN'S PRINCIPAL CRITICISM); B) HE HAD RUN HIS

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 00556 02 OF 02 161233Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 0556

MINISTRY "OUT OF HIS HAT" AND HAD NOT KEPT HIS IMMEDIATE
SUBALTERNS AND HIS AMBASSADORS ABROAD FULLY BRIEFED RE-
GARDING POLICY AND HIS OWN ACTIVITIES AND WAS "UNPRO-
FESSIONAL" IN HIS STYLE; C) HE HAD NOT PAID ENOUGH
ATTENTION TO THE CHINESE MISSION HERE AND HAD "TILTED"
TOWARD THE USSR; D) HE HAD EFFECTED TRANSFERS OF MONEY
ABROAD, THROUGH THE GUYANESE HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON
AND IN THE PAST THROUGH THE GUYANESE MISSION IN NEW
YORK, TO HIS ESTRANGED WIFE; E) HE HAD EXCEEDED HIS

INSTRUCTIONS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO PARAMARIBO TO NEGOTIATE AN END TO THE SURINAM GOVERNMENT'S PROHIBITION AGAINST GUYANESE FISHING ON THE CORENTYNE RIVER BY CONCEDING TOO QUICKLY TO A GOS DEMAND THAT A SURINAM-FLAG TRAWLER SEIZED LAST SEPTEMBER BE RETURNED AS A QUID PRO QUO IN EXCHANGE FOR THE REINSTITUTION OF FISHING PERMITS.

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PAGE 02 GEORGE 00556 02 OF 02 161233Z

5. THE CONSEQUENCES OF WILLS' DEPARTURE IN TERMS OF US-GUYANESE RELATIONS: ON THE BASIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS EMBASSY OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, WILLS HAS BEEN AN EXTRAORDINARILY EASY FOREIGN MINISTER WITH WHOM TO DEAL. INFORMAL, HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, FLEXIBLE AND A LOVER OF FREEWHEELING GIVE AND TAKE, THE EMBASSY HERE ALWAYS FOUND HIM APPROACHABLE AND READILY ACCESSIBLE ON THE MOST PRICKLY OF ISSUES. EVEN DURING THE DEEP FREEZE IN US-GOG RELATIONS (ROUGHLY FROM OCTOBER 1976 TO FEBRUARY 1977) WILLS FOUND WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE CHARGE AND THE DEPARTMENT CONCERNING HIS INFORMAL, CANDID JUDGMENTS REGARDING THE TREND OF EVENTS. HIS SUCCESSOR, RASHLEIGH JACKSON, THE PRESENT GUYANESE AMBASSADOR TO THE UN, WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT STYLE. JACKSON IS ALSO RATED AS BEING HIGHLY INTELLIGENT BUT HE PROBABLY WILL BE MORE "BURNHAM'S MAN" THAN WAS THE WIDE-RANGING AND IMPLUSIVE WILLS. JUDGING FROM HIS PERFORMANCE DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS AT THE UN, HE WILL PROBABLY INCLINE TOWARD THE THIRD WORLD, G-77 LINE, THAT HE KNOWS SO WELL. THOUGH PERSONALLY AFFABLE WE DO NOT EXPECT THAT HE WILL BE AS APPROACHABLE OR AS FORTHCOMING AND HELPFUL AS WILLS HAD BEEN. BECAUSE JACKSON HAS NO BASE WITHIN THE RULING PEOPLES NATIONAL CONGRESS, HE WILL, INITIALLY AT LEAST, BE INCAPABLE OF PROVIDING THE INSIGHTS INTO THE HIGHEST COUNCILS OF THE GOG THAT WILLS HAS BEEN ABLE TO CONVEY. OBVIOUSLY OUR MINISTERIAL "WINDOW" ONTO THE GOG WILL NOW BE AT LEAST PARTIALLY SHUTTERED.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR GUYANA'S FUTURE FOREIGN POLICY: IF THE "GREAT DEBATE," RAISED WITHIN THE COM MEETING AND BY EXTENSION WITHIN THE GOG ON WHETHER THERE

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PAGE 03 GEORGE 00556 02 OF 02 161233Z

SHOULD BE A MOVE TOWARD THE WEST AND A DE-EMPHASIS OF GUYANA'S EMPHATIC RHETORICAL DEVOTION TO ITS OWN BRAND

OF SOCIALISM, HAS BEEN WON BY THE HARDLINERS (AS WILLS' DEPARTURE MAY SIGNAL) IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT GUYANA WILL IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS ATTEMPT TO RE-ESTABLISH A LEADERSHIP POSITION WITHIN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. IN RECENT MONTHS, DUE TO THE NATIONS'S DEEPENING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, A RE-EXAMINATION WITHIN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GOG HAS BEEN GOING ON, AND MEANWHILE THE SHIP OF STATE HAS BEEN WALLOWING IN THE TROUGH AS FAR AS FOREIGN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN CONCERNED, AWAITING A NEW COURSE TO BE SET. WE WILL NOW HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE IF THAT NEW COURSE IS TO BE ONWARD AND LEFTWARD. IF IT IS, THE LEVEL OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY COULD VERY WELL PICK UP, AT LEAST AT THE UN AND WITHIN THE NAM.

7. MEANWHILE GUYANA'S ECONOMIC CONDITION CAN BE EXPECTED TO WORSEN. WILLS' ABRUPT DEPARTURE MAY WELL CAUSE NEAR NEIGHBORS SUCH AS SURINAM, VENEZUELA AND BRAZIL TO HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT GUYANA. CARACAS AND BRASILIA MAY INDEED BE INCLINED TO HOLD BACK FROM PROVIDING SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE; PARAMARIBO, FOR ITS PART WILL BE EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT NORMALIZING RELATIONS. ELSEWHERE, IN WESTERN CAPITALS AND THE IFIS, THE FIRST REACTION MAY VERY WELL BE "WAIT AND SEE" WHICH, GIVEN THE VERY URGENT AND REAL ECONOMIC PLIGHT CONFRONTING GUYANA, WOULD BE THE WORST POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT.

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